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RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 002905

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DEPT FOR SA/INS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: PALACE REMAINS ON COURSE WITH FEBRUARY 1 GOALS

REF: A. KATHMANDU 2793

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 2874  
[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 2816  
[1](#)D. KATHMANDU 2743  
[1](#)E. KATHMANDU 2556

Classified By: Charge Elisabeth Millard. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

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[1](#)1. (C) In a December 20 press conference, Vice-Chairman Dr. Tulsi Giri gave what was widely regarded as a response to the messages carried by Indian FS Saran (ref A) and the Ambassador in his December 16 meeting with the King. Giri said the government was moving forward on the King's February 1 plan, and having already "controlled corruption and weakened terrorist forces," the government was on course to hold elections. Responding to Giri's remarks that there was no possibility of the government reconciling with the Parties on the basis of the 12-point understanding, UML leader M.K. Nepal said, "We would never backoff from the 12-point understanding with the Maoists." NC leader G.P. Koirala reiterated the alliance's plan to boycott the municipal election. The royalist Rastriya Prajantra Party (RPP) had not yet taken a stand on participation in the upcoming election, threatening a split within the party. While no political leaders wanted to predict Maoist action, continuing violence in the villages, and the Maoist opposition to the elections caused many to worry that the Maoists would not extend their unilateral cease-fire, set to expire on January [1](#)3. End Summary.

Giri Looks Toward Election

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[1](#)2. (C) On December 20, Giri ruled out a government cease-fire, called the Maoists capacity to strike weak, and dismissed reports that the government was forming a peace committee, saying there was no possibility of reconciliation with the seven party alliance on the basis of the 12-point understanding. "They have joined hands with the rebels to destroy the established institution of the monarchy, this will never be accepted by the government" he said. Giri claimed that the King's February 1 move was achieving its goal, saying, "February 1 had three objectives -- tackling corruption, settling terrorism and holding polls -- to strengthen democracy." "Since the government has controlled

corruption and broken the back of terrorism, it is preparing to accomplish the third objective," he added.

#### Parties Reiterate Election Boycott

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13. (C) On December 21, UML leader M.K. Nepal told the media that Giri had spoken the mind of the palace and by ruling out talks with Maoists showed that the government was against restoration of peace, democracy and progress. M.K. Nepal said, "We would never back off from the 12-point understanding with the Maoists." He added that the seven-party alliance "would not budge on issues like election to a constituent assembly, restoration of democracy and the end of autocracy." He said, "Giri's arguments give the impression that he has gone out of his mind." M.K. Nepal, one of the drafters of the 1990 Constitution, added that the only way forward was to draft a new constitution by a constituent assembly because the current constitution had failed to meet the needs of the people. On December 20, in his hometown of Biratnagar, G.P. Koirala reiterated the Parties' stance that the most important part of the seven-party alliance's "joint people's movement" was foiling the government's attempt to hold municipal elections by actively boycotting it. He directed party workers to reach every household to tell people not to participate in the unconstitutional election. He downplayed the leadership dispute within the NC's student wing, the Nepal Student Union, (ref B) and urged cadre not to highlight the intra-party issue. According to an NC central committee member, the seven parties have decided to appoint point persons to each of the municipalities to coordinate actions against the elections, such as demonstrations and door-to-door canvassing.

#### RPP Split Over Election Participation

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14. (C) The royalist Rastriya Prajantra Party (RPP) (not a member of the seven-party alliance) was on the verge of an internal split on December 21 after some members threatened to hold the party's special General Convention themselves if party chairman Pashupati Shumsher Rana refused to summon the convention within nine days. At issue was the party's stance on participation in the King's upcoming municipal polls. "There are hardly five weeks left to file candidacy but the party has yet to decide whether or not to take part," complained party Vice-chairman Lawoti. Central Committee member Dhruva Bahadur Pradan told Emboff on December 20 that some party members also wanted to vote to revoke party membership for those who had accepted places in the recent Cabinet (ref D).

#### Parties Look for Maoist Monitoring Mechanism

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15. (C) M.K. Nepal told the Charge on December 21 that the Maoists and the Parties had not met to flesh out the 12-point understanding since its announcement on November 22 (ref E). Noting that the Maoists were not fully keeping their commitments on the ground, M.K. Nepal said the Parties were working on a mechanism to monitor the Maoists activities in the countryside, and had approached the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for assistance. He said that ideas for monitoring were a work in progress, but noted that the Maoists would have to accept monitoring, "or the understanding won't be worth the paper it is written on." Meanwhile, local NGO Human Rights and Peace Society (HURPES) issued a press release on December 21 urging the Maoists to stop acts of cruelty against civilians, which had continued in several districts. HURPES drew attention to recent actions in Okhaldhunga and Ramechhap Districts in which Maoists forcibly displaced villagers by locking farmer's houses and looting their property, saying "innocent villagers, from year-old children to 84 year olds, are forced to seek refuge at a neighbor's haystack."

#### Uncertain if Maoists Will Extend Cease-fire

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16. (C) Minendra Rijal (NC-D) told Emboff that after four months of cease-fire, the Maoist cadre were pressuring the leadership to fight, arguing that the government was weak and now was the time to strike. He therefore predicted that the Maoists would end their cease-fire, though cautioned that it was difficult to predict Maoist action. Anil Jha (NSP-A) agreed, noting that the Maoists wanted to threaten candidates in the municipal election. Pradan (RPP) said that he believed many people in District headquarters wanted to vote to demonstrate that they could do so, but that the Maoists would threaten and use violence to prevent them from doing so. Virtually every party leader we have spoken to over the past week has showed discomfiture when asked about their posture if the Maoists resume violence. Most note that "of course we must condemn it," but it is unclear whether they would actually renounce the 12-point understanding.

#### Protests On Nagarkot Incident Continue

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17. (C) Students around the country continued to protest the December 16 massacre at Nagarkot (ref C), sometimes violently. The December 22 Himalayan Times carried a front page photo of police using batons to quell rock throwing students in Kathmandu. On December 22, Ian Martin of OHCHR released a statement noting that he was particularly concerned that "all evidence, including securing the scene of the shootings, was apparently not properly conserved, which will make a throughout investigation by the (government) Commission more difficult." Sapana Malla, Supreme Court advocate, told the Charge on December 21 that the students were using the Nagarkot incident as an excuse to protest. She said the Parties did not particularly welcome the students' display of violence.

#### Comment

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18. (C) While Giri's comments were widely interpreted as HMGN's negative response to India and the U.S. urging the King to reach out to the political parties and declare a ceasefire, the King himself twice repeated to the British Ambassador on December 21 that "you musn't assume that everything Giri says has my blessing." Regardless of whether Giri's rejection of a change of course had a royal belessing or not, accommodation appears nowhere in sight -- with the King sticking to his timeline for municipal elections on February 8, polls the Maoists announced on December 23 they will violently oppose (septel).  
MILLARD